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SERVICE DATE - AUGUST 10, 2001

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-57 (SUB-NO.52X)

**SOO LINE RAILROAD COMPANY-ABANDONMENT OF THE 29TH STREET
CORRIDOR IN MINNEAPOLIS, HENNEPIN COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Soo Line Railroad (Soo) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for the abandonment of an approximately 4.7 mile of railroad between milepost 428.3 (TC&W switch turnout west of France Avenue) and milepost 423.6 (Near the end of track at the eastern edge of Cedar Avenue) which traverses through United States Postal Service Zip Codes 55406, 55407, 55408, and 55416, in Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to abandon service on the line.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad has submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment. The railroad has served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). We have investigated the record in this proceeding. Also, we have contacted appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota State Historical Society, National Park Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Coastal Zone Management, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Minnesota Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, National Geodetic Survey, City of Minneapolis-City Hall and Hennepin County-Chief Executive.

Traffic

Soo states that it is seeking exemption because the line is no longer viable. Soo further states that the only remaining shipper on the line, CEPRO Elevator (CEPRO), informed them that it would cease operations as of June 15, 2001, and such traffic has ceased. The primary commodity handled on the line was barley. CEPRO moved 418 carloads over the line in 2000 and 562 carloads for the base year in 2001. Soo states that these carloads were diverted to other grain facilities served by rail. There are no other shippers on the line.

Future Land Use

Hennepin County's Regional Rail Authority (Authority) is the underlying corridor owner. If abandonment authority is granted, the property is expected to be developed by the Authority as part of the city's Midtown Greenway trail project.

CONDITIONS

The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer has not yet completed their review of the proposed abandonment. Therefore, we recommend that a condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority, requiring the Soo to retain its interest in the line until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) advises that three geodetic station markers, FRANCE 2, H 2 A, and H-2, have been identified that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. If there are any planned activities which will disturb or destroy these markers, NGS requires not less than 90 days notification in advance of such activities in order to plan for their relocation. We recommend that a condition be placed on any grant of abandonment authority requiring Soo to notify NGS 90 days in advance of disturbing these markers.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, abandon of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandon would include denial (and, therefore, no change in operations) or continued operation by another operator. In this case, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Room 711, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Phillis Johnson-Ball who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-57 (Sub-No.52X) in all correspondence addressed to the Commission.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Phillis Johnson-Ball at (202) 565-1530.

Date made available to the public: August 10, 2001

Comment due date: September 10, 2001.

By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP NEEDS TO BE SCANNED.